

are usually well looked after and fed—in addition to there being a rat or two—I do not know. To make a good ship's cat as much as a good sailor, he must join quite young; otherwise he will take the first opportunity of deserting and not coming back again. Once, however, he settles down to ship's life, and he is unfortunate enough to miss his passage, he appears perfectly content to join the next ship available in preference to living on shore.

The other day while we were lying at Wellington, New Zealand, a very pretty pure bred female cat came up to my deck, and sat down as if she owned the place. Of course I knew she was a ship's cat, and on making enquiries found she belonged to the S.S.—, which had left the port that day. Sometimes we return cats to their ships, when we can, but this one—the only pure bred on board, except 'Tommy,' we 'pinched'; and she lived to have a family by a wharf Tom at Basrah. This Basrah cat by the way 'belonged' to the shed, and gave us the impression that he specialized in marrying ship's lady cats as they arrived. 'Nellie,' as we called the New Zealand cat, was stolen by some boatmen at Alleppey, and her family one by one disappeared, either through cat-admiring boatmen or by falling overboard during their frolics. I might mention that cats of whatever breed are always welcome on most ships. They keep down the rats and besides, are companions.

When we get a cat of low breed, and not quite to our liking, we surreptitiously put him aboard another ship, when the officers are not looking; but this only happens rarely.

Families born on board are all kept. We talk a lot about drowning a few—just to help mother—but when the time comes no one will do the deed, and they are preserved, only for some of them to be drowned afterwards by slipping overboard while at play. Thus nature finds her own way.

S. S. 'GURNA',
BOMBAY,
October 1926.

JOHN H. HUGHES, M.B.E.
Commander.

[Much ink has been spent on stories concerning the reputed extraordinary homing instinct of the cat. It is very seldom, unfortunately, that one gets such stories—especially the more remarkable ones—first hand. It is usually A, whose word can be confidently relied on, who tells it exactly as he heard it from his intimate friend B, (a lady whose great fondness and knowledge of animals renders its veracity unquestionable) who when staying at an inn heard the story from the landlady who was personally acquainted with some friends of the people to whom the cat belonged! If a fraction of the tales in circulation respecting the homing sense of the cat were true, this faculty must certainly border on the supernatural, but, there is no doubt that a great proportion of the remarkable returns-home are exaggerations.

In the above instance, however, the strangeness as Capt. Hughes rightly observes, lies not in that the animal having missed its own ship got aboard another lying alongside the dock in Bombay, but that when by coincidence he found this one berthed close to his old home in Calcutta he promptly crossed over to the latter.

It was in all likelihood by sight that Tommy recognized his old home and not by smell which is commonly believed to be the guide. It has been proved by repeated experiments that a cat's power of smell is extremely indifferent. Eds.]

V.—WILD DOGS IN MYSORE

With reference to Capt. Windle's letter in vol. xxxi, No. 2 of the journal; I shot wild dogs out of seven different packs in this district last year and have seen many others at various times. Their colour varies from light golden to brown-red, but all that I have seen in this district whether on the plateau or in the Wynaad have had not only a black tip to the tail but black on its upper side for practically its whole length. Down near sea-level the colour is lighter, the tail much less bushy and with a blackish tip only. The above is confirmed by Mr. E. J. van Ingen, our local taxidermist, who states that in his experience the South Indian wild dog always has the black tip.

I am sending you under separate cover four skins in case they may be of interest;

(1) Full-size dark skin with black bushy tail—this is the ordinary type of the district. Shot at Anaikatti in February, 1926.

(2) Full-size lighter skin with narrow tail and little black on it. Shot on the Tellicherry Ghaut in Malabar in October, 1925.

(3) Small-size dark skin (without head)—half-grown dog shot at Mudumalai in May, 1925. A full-grown dog was with it crouching in the ditch but was not seen in time.

(4) Small-size light skin (with head) marked 520—shot at Mudumalai in April, 1925 out of a pack of eight or ten *all of small size*. The dogs were running towards the fire-line we were on and seeing us stopped and stared some thirty yards off. I noticed at once that they were small and looked the pack over carefully before opening fire to see if there were any full-size dogs, but there were none. I was surprised to see a pack of what I then presumed to be immature dogs running on their own account (I had met a pack of three full-grown and two small dogs at the same place a fortnight before), but after reading Capt. Windle's letter have begun to wonder if these may not have been a smaller kind of mature dog. Unfortunately only one of this pack was bagged, and with the skin I send the skull together with a full-size ordinary skull for comparison. From this you will, no doubt, be able to decide if the smaller dog was mature or not. To me it appears mature.

As regards the noises made by wild dogs—a whistle is the usual form of communication and is generally used to call the pack together when they have got separated as the result of firing. They occasionally whine or whimper and I have twice heard them yap. I have never heard them bark, but the well-known Nilgiri sportsman, the late Genl. Hamilton ('Hawkeye') writing in 1876 mentions that a wild dog which he had fired at, and missed, near Avalanche, 'only retreated a short distance and then rushed back tail erect and barking furiously.' Two more long shots also missed and the dog then decamped 'barking for some time after he disappeared.'

C. E. M. Russel (*Bullet and Shot in Indian Forest*) mentions two cases of aggressive behaviour by wild dogs towards men, and Col. Pollock (*Sporting Days in South India*) states that they will sometimes kill *helas* (buffalo calves) tied out as baits for tiger. A case of the latter occurred last June at Masinigudi when two sportsmen were sitting up in a machan over a live heifer. A pack of wild dogs appeared and attacked the heifer which was only saved by the sportsmen opening fire.

Why is it that old-time sporting writers so seldom mention wild dogs? Were they considered beneath notice, or was it that they were much scarcer then?

Since writing the above, I have been down at Anaikatti, and have made enquiries on the point raised by Capt. Windle. My shikari, Jaora, a reliable man, stated positively that there are two distinct kinds of wild dogs. He said that the larger kind only were found south of the Moyar River, but that a smaller kind hunted in Mysore to the north of the 'Dirch'. The latter he described as similar in colour to the larger kind but with a light patch on the head. He said they were much fiercer, very destructive to sheep, and would not hesitate to attack man, which the larger kind never did. They were to be found round Bachhalli and Bandipur—the latter place is only a few miles from Mudumalai of which Capt. Windle writes.

Of course this is merely hearsay, but I have always found Jaora's statements reliable.

I hope to be able to visit Bachhalli next month, and will then make further enquiries.

LOVEDALE, NILGIRIS.

October 23, 1926.

E. G. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS,

Major I.A. (Retired.)

[A careful examination of the skins and skulls submitted by Major Phythian-Adams has convinced us that they all belong to one species of dog only, viz., *C. dukhunensis*. The apparent differences are doubtless due to age and to the different times of the year at which the specimens were obtained. For instance No. 1 which was shot in winter (February 1926) naturally shows a better coat than No. 2 shot in October where it would be just preparing for the partial seasonal change.

Nos. 3 and 4 are obviously immature animals. In the skull of No. 4 milk teeth are present, the fusion of the cranial sutures is incomplete, and no dorsal ridge appears. Eds.]